

WHERE HAS ROTUMAN CULTURE GONE? AND WHAT IS IT DOING THERE?

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This article explores the now-problematic concept of "culture" and related terms in the context of a diffuse transnational Rotuman population, more than three-fourths of whom live abroad in Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and Europe. We begin by reflecting on prevailing criticisms of the culture concept, then present data in historical perspective on Rotuman communities in five different locations: Rotuma, Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i. In presenting these data we examine the patterning effects of four key variables, including (1) macrosocietal attitudes, (2) the nature of the migration flow, (3) the size of communities, and (4) differential socialization experiences. We conclude with reflections on the conceptual modifications needed to understand the contemporary Rotuman experience.

Anthropological "culture" is not what it used to be. And once the representational challenge is seen to be the portrayal and understanding of local/global historical encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, then one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as on rooted, native ones.

—James Clifford (1992:101)

Introduction

IT WAS MUCH EASIER to talk and write about culture when people stayed put. The people who occupied the Samoan archipelago enacted customs that exemplified Samoan culture, the Maori in New Zealand followed ances-

tral traditions that were aspects of Maori culture, the Hawaiians organized themselves according to Hawaiian culture. Or so it seemed. Of course anthropologists recognized that people moved about and that when they did so, culture diffused. In the 1930s the concept of "acculturation" was introduced in recognition of the complexities that occurred when peoples of different cultures intermingled. But most people stayed within their home territories and perpetuated the ways of their ancestors, albeit with various additions and modifications. Although our ethnographic accounts made reality seem somewhat neater than it was, they made enough sense to give us confidence that culture was not only a useful concept but one that was vital for any satisfactory understanding of humanity. Indeed, we came to see it as the defining feature of our discipline.

When people stayed put—when "culture" was confined to a well-defined space—it was easy to think of culture in terms like "systemic" and "holistic," presumably because the patterning of any given activity was modeled after other activities, and sets of activities were functionally linked to one another. The continuous interactions of people in face-to-face communities reinforced the salience of models for acting, thinking, and emoting. But what happens when large numbers of people migrate to environments dominated by alternative cultural models? Under these circumstances people must learn new ways of acting and thinking or reformulate those that derive from their "home" community. They must select which aspects of their culture to preserve and value, and which to discard or place in a mental holding compartment, to be reactivated when visiting the home community or re-creating remembered aspects of it with other expatriates. The models that constitute culture often become fragmented, transformed in ways that would be unrecognizable to one's ancestors (or relatives back "home"). Thus, the full and encompassing cultural experience of a home community is often replaced by a radically simplified schema of "traditional culture," based on a few activities like dance and truncated rituals, or selected symbolic elements like special foods or dress.

In this article we explore the now-problematic concept of "culture" in the context of a diffuse international Rotuman population, more than three-fourths of whom live abroad in Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, and Europe. How is Rotuman culture manifested in overseas enclaves? In what ways does the experience of Rotumans abroad affect their (and our) notion of Rotuman culture? What processes reinforce or curtail cultural activity and cultural identity? These and related questions inspired us to investigate Rotuman enclaves abroad. In the course of our research, we have been forced to reconsider the concept of culture as it applies to such phenomena.

What Use Is Culture Anyway?

In an admirably cogent article reviewing postmodern assaults on the culture concept, Robert Brightman notes that "recent objections to culture receive both absolutist and historical phrasings, the former holding that the culture concept has been flawed from its inception and the latter that culture—viable enough as a device in earlier historical moments—can no longer engage a world in which social identities, practices and ideologies are increasingly incongruent and volatile" (1995:509). Brightman lists a range of criticisms attacking the reification, localism, holism, legalism, boundedness, totalization, coherence, discreteness, homogeneity, objectivism, idealism, and ahistoricism associated with "culture" in much anthropological writing (ibid.:511–526). Many objections are based on the attribution of regulatory functions to the concept, without due regard for problems of conflict, inconsistency, misunderstandings, contradictions, and the like. Thus, critics like Rosaldo (1989) argue for a view of social life that recognizes the contested nature of social "reality," which raises issues of relative power or "hegemony" (Gramsci 1971) within and between social groups. Alternative conceptualizations suggested as replacements for culture include "praxis" or "practice" (Bourdieu 1977), "ethnoscapes" (Appadurai 1990), "discourse" (Abu-Lughod 1991), and various terms emphasizing human agency.

As Brightman points out, recent critiques have tended to "foreground conceptual stability. . . at the expense of lability, presupposing that there existed in the past and into the present a culture construct with a determinate definition, now discredited" (1995:527). He rightly criticizes arguments that ignore the writings of theorists such as Sapir, who employed a concept of culture that was historical and accorded considerable agency to its participants (ibid.:538); Malinowski, who saw cultural reality as a seething mixture of conflicting principles rather than a consistent logical scheme (ibid.:533); and Radin, who argued eloquently for recognition of individual agency and historicism (ibid.:534).

Following Brightman, the issue is, in our estimation, not whether it is necessary to substitute another term for culture in order to understand contemporary Rotuman social life, but what semantic qualities *any* analytical concept should have to be useful. We choose to use the culture concept in large measure because Rotumans have adopted it as a way of reflecting on their social circumstances. Its utility for them informs our own usage, though we embed it in a somewhat different discursive milieu.

We see "culture" as a construct based on metaphorical associations and/or analogies. Indeed, one could argue that its very viability is based on its capacity to assume a multitude of metaphorical forms. In its earliest anthro-

pological incarnation evolutionary metaphors dominated (Tylor 1871:1). Subsequently, when communities were, to all appearances, still confined to definite localities, organic metaphors emphasizing holism, coherence, and integration seemed to make sense. More recently metaphors of "symbolic webs" (Geertz) and "cognitive grammars" (Goodenough) came into vogue, continuing the holistic emphasis. The key question at the moment, as we perceive it, is what kinds of metaphor would be suitable today, when localized, bounded communities are no longer the norm and concepts are needed to handle movement, rapid change and interchange, conflict, and contestation.

Historical Background of the Home Island

Rotuma is a small island some 465 kilometers north of Fiji, with which it has been politically linked since cession to Great Britain in 1881. As with many Pacific islands, local food production formed the basis of trade with visiting European vessels, especially whalers. Rotumans also eagerly signed aboard as crew, quickly earning and maintaining a reputation as responsible, hard-working sailors; they traveled to every part of the globe (see Howard 1995). Beginning in the 1870s a lively commerce developed in coconut oil, and later, copra.

Following cession, Rotuma was closed as a port of entry. Rotuman engagement with the world continued but took place through Fiji, with gradually increasing numbers of Rotumans moving there and settling (see below). Rotuma's special connection with Fiji has contributed to the island's prosperity in a number of ways: (1) by permitting in-country access to wider education and employment opportunities; (2) by supplying government support to the island's infrastructure and providing jobs (approximately one hundred government employees today); and especially (3) by allowing ease of interaction among Rotumans in Fiji and on the home island. On the one hand, free access to in-country travel has facilitated an increasingly consumer-affluent lifestyle on the island; on the other, it has facilitated the provisioning of Fiji Rotumans with important cultural resources like pandanus mats and foods from home. The ease of travel affords people from both sides opportunities to visit each other repeatedly and to experience variant lifestyles (see Rensel 1993). It also facilitates the sharing of information, which becomes the basis for a common discourse (discussed below).

Since migrant family members abroad are an important source of cash and valued commodities, people on Rotuma are motivated to maintain family ties with them, sometimes at the expense of relatives at home. The boundaries of the Rotuman community are thus extended outward to incorporate enclaves abroad. Recently, migrants from several different locations have been arranging family reunions on Rotuma. This expanded sense of commu-

nity involves more than kinship, however. Migrants sometimes raise funds or donate equipment for special projects on Rotuma (e.g., for schools or the hospital). Organized visits between various migrant enclaves (Fiji to New Zealand, New Zealand to Fiji/Rotuma, Fiji/Rotuma to Australia) are becoming increasingly common and are also the basis for fund-raising drives.

Although Rotuma's economy has become increasingly dependent on imported goods and services, virtually every household on the island has access to both garden lands and reef resources (fish, shellfish, and edible seaweed); these resources along with animal husbandry make self-sufficiency possible for nearly every family. And despite the acceleration of change, social life on the island remains vibrant, rich, and absorbing. In our recent visits we have found community activity as intense as ever, with frequent gatherings, sports competitions, and feasts. During one particular month we documented twenty-five festive events in just one district. Furthermore, political intrigues over titles and control of land and other resources as well as controversies over issues like tourism keep people engaged in community affairs. In fact, life on Rotuma is sufficiently comfortable and interesting that many successful, cosmopolitan migrants are returning to live on the island following retirement.

If one ignores the flow of population to and from the island (Howard and Rensel 1994), one might characterize the culture of Rotuma as an evolving system of customs, beliefs, and shared symbols. In other words, social cohesion on the island appears to be sufficient for the conceptualization of culture being attacked by critics to retain some currency, both for anthropologists and for Rotumans who live there. However, the extent of the Rotuman diaspora requires reconsideration of the culture concept.

Rotumans in Fiji: The Development of Ethnic Consciousness

When Howard first began fieldwork in 1959–1960, approximately 3,000 Rotumans were on Rotuma and about 1,500 others lived in Fiji. Birth rates were high, the death rate had declined dramatically following the introduction of wonder drugs in the early 1950s (Howard 1979), and the overall Rotuman population was expanding rapidly. Out-migration was not a new strategy for coping with the resultant pressure on the island's resources—Rotumans began emigrating as soon as opportunities presented themselves (Howard 1995)—but the pace of the outflow was accelerating. According to the 1996 census, there were 2,580 Rotumans on the island while 7,147 were residing in Fiji. We estimate that perhaps an additional 1,000 to 2,000 Rotumans have moved abroad and settled in Australia, New Zealand, other Pacific islands, North America, and Europe.

One consequence of out-migration has been the genesis of an ethnic con-

sciousness among Rotumans (Howard 1977). As they increasingly came into regularized contact with others (Fijians, Fiji Indians, Europeans, and so on), Rotumans were transformed from an ethnic aggregate to an ethnic community, that is, an interactive network based on their common heritage. This shift was accompanied by the development of ethnic consciousness—a recognition that one's ethnicity is a significant factor in ordering social relations within the broader society. As Howard described it:

Ethnic consciousness may develop on an individual level in response to a number of circumstances: these include overt discrimination by others, a sense of superiority or inferiority, or status ambiguities that can be resolved by giving primacy to ethnicity. Collectively, ethnic consciousness emerges as a result of repeated messages circulated throughout networks of kinsmen, friends, and neighbors to the effect that other identity criteria are less significant for structuring interpersonal relations than ethnic differences. The redundancy of these messages serves to structure both social interaction among ethnic cohorts and an ideology of "we-ness," the sharing of a common social fate. The structural manifestations of these messages are the extension of close personal bonds characteristic of kinship and friendship to all who are members of the same ethnic category and the restricting of one's personal relationships to people within that category. That one member of the category is shamed, offended, or honored implies shame, anger, and honor for all vis-à-vis nonmembers. To the extent that nonmembers of an ethnic category view members as interchangeable, the redundancy of the relevance of ethnicity is likely to be reinforced. For example, when the message that an individual lost his job or was abused because of his ethnicity circulates through a network of people of the same category, indignation and emotional solidarity are more likely to be engendered than if other identity variables are acknowledged to have played a part. The notion of sharing a common fate, if accepted by members of an ethnic category, takes on the character of an ideology by which people interpret their relationships within and without the network of ethnic cohorts. (1977:165–166)

Howard found that ethnic consciousness varied markedly in four Rotuman enclaves in Fiji (Levuka, Lautoka, Suva, Vatukoula) and identified three types of variables that appeared to pattern those differences: demographic, social structural, and cultural. A critical mass had to be present for Rotuman ethnicity to become salient, and the larger the size of the enclave in relation

to the overall population, the more visible the group became. Residence patterns also affected ethnic consciousness insofar as scattered housing resulted in less visibility than concentrated housing. Howard also hypothesized that growth through immigration tends to increase ethnic consciousness because of the continual need to socialize newcomers, a process frequently requiring the explication of boundary mechanisms (1977:188-189).

Social structural variables include those imposed on ethnic communities by the dominant society (discussed below) and such factors as job distribution (the more jobs are concentrated in particular sectors of the economy, the greater the tendency for members of an ethnic community to identify with one another) and leadership legitimated along ethnic lines.

Cultural variables are multitudinous and include the degree to which a group's customs and beliefs are compatible with other groups' customs and beliefs, cultural formulations of group differences (e.g., in racial, linguistic, or behavioral terms), the degree to which kinship is extended, the value placed on belonging to a cohesive community, and so on.

One process involved in the development of ethnic consciousness was the objectification of Rotuman culture (Howard 1963). As Rotumans were exposed to higher forms of Western education, they learned to think about their heritage in abstract terms (in terms of laws, social organization, beliefs, and so forth). Among these terms was the concept of culture. "Rotuman culture" thus became an object of thought, analysis, discussion, and debate. This new phenomenon required both the ability to distance oneself from one's cultural experience and the ability to make meaningful comparisons with other cultures. The result has been the development of a cultural consciousness that parallels ethnic consciousness. Cultural consciousness, in turn, is a significant component of cultural identity, that is, thinking about oneself as a member of a category (or community) based on shared cultural attributes.

Diaspora and the Development of Cultural Consciousness

The focus of our most recent research is on Rotuman migrants further afield, in Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i. Our main concern is with conditions and processes that shape cultural identity in these various settings. We have paid special attention to migrant adjustment to these environments, since the types of adaptation made by migrants condition their conceptions of themselves singly and collectively.

We see cultural identity, in part, as an expression of power differentials in society, insofar as people may either have identity thrust upon them or be positioned to choose among various possibilities. The institutionalization of

ethnic categories also plays a significant role. For example, in colonial Fiji, ethnic (i.e., racial) categories were institutionalized, depriving people of choice, while in contemporary Australia "Rotuman" is a largely unknown category, thus offering migrants a number of options for self-identification.

We have identified four variables that influence the salience of identity issues among Rotuman migrants as well as their attitudes toward, and the emotional tone they associate with, identity choices. These include (1) macrosocietal attitudes, (2) the nature of the migration flow, (3) the size of the migrant community, and (4) socialization experiences. We examine each of these variables in the contexts of Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i. We then discuss the behavioral and material expressions of identity that characterize Rotumanness in these communities.

Macrosocietal Attitudes

Fiji

In Fiji, during the colonial period, racialism was institutionalized. Initially, the major categories were European and Fijian; soon after, the categories Indian, Chinese, Polynesian, and Rotuman were added (and for census purposes the category of "other"). Interbreeding between Europeans and other ethnic groups disrupted the "purity" of these distinctions and resulted in the category of "half-caste" (see Legislative Council, Fiji, 1911). Initially "half-caste" was a pariah category, emblematic of the breakdown of a proper hierarchy in which Europeans were distinguished conceptually as "civilized," while the rest, to varying degrees, were considered "uncivilized." By the mid-1930s attitudes had changed, and the term "half-caste" gave way to the label "part-European," which had distinctly positive connotations. Part-Europeans were placed immediately below Europeans in the reformulated hierarchy, with their European "blood" now considered a definite advantage. Part-Europeans were given preferential treatment and granted privileges sometimes overlapping with those of Europeans.

For Rotumans, interbreeding with Europeans began early in the 1820s, when a substantial number of renegade sailors took up residence on the island. This interbreeding is acknowledged in the 1936 Fiji census, in which the issue of race is discussed. Concerning Rotumans the report states:

The people of Rotuma are Polynesian stock, but are, nevertheless, somewhat of a mixture. During the last century the Island was not infrequently visited by Whalers, and it is known that at least three Europeans either settled ashore or deserted their vessels and re-

mained on the Island. The men had large families who, intermarrying with inhabitants, were absorbed into the race.

Tradition says that at some time or another, either a Chinese or Japanese vessel was wrecked on the Island or perhaps arrived and stayed there. The definitely Mongolian features which are observable in many Rotumans may thus be accounted for.

The race to-day is a mixture of Polynesian, European and Mongolian, and it is in some cases extremely difficult to distinguish between a European-Rotuman and a so-called full blooded Rotuman. (Legislative Council, Fiji, 1936:11)

This confounding of racial categories gave Rotumans, if not a relatively privileged place in the hierarchy of non-European ethnic groups, at least some latitude for proving their worth, which they did through education and hard work, soon acquiring a reputation for responsibility and honesty. By 1960 Rotumans were well overrepresented in professional, management, and supervisory positions (Howard 1966, 1970). One could therefore be proud of being Rotuman in Fiji, and Rotuman identity there coalesced into a distinctly positive self-identification.

Australia

The first Rotumans migrated to Australia as sailors and as participants in the Torres Islands pearl-diving industry (descendants of these early migrants have been identified in northern Australia and on Thursday Island; see Shukul 1992). A more recent stream began in the 1950s and has accelerated in recent years. Over this time span Rotumans have encountered a shift in policies and attitudes toward non-European ethnicities. During the post-World War II years Australian immigration policy was exclusionist—the so-called White Australia policy prevailed. The category of “Rotuman” was essentially unknown; to respond “Rotuman” when asked one’s ethnicity by white Australians required explanation and was generally avoided. One could say “Fijian,” use the somewhat more acceptable categories of “Pacific Islander” or “Polynesian,” or, if light-skinned enough (and especially if one had a European-sounding last name), one could pass as an “Aussie.” For the most part, however, it was best to avoid ethnic categorization whenever possible.

With the demise of the White Australia policy and its replacement by a commitment to making Australia a “multicultural” society, the position of Rotuman migrants has changed. It is now “in” to be ethnic. Multiculturalism encourages an emphasis on distinctiveness as opposed to identification with the unmarked, connotatively bland concept of “Aussie.” Rotumans have there-

fore been encouraged to reevaluate their ethnic identity, to organize into groups based on their Rotuman heritage, and to give public cultural performances of various kinds. They are still confronted with the fact that to most white Australians Rotuma is unknown, and in most encounters they identify themselves as from Fiji or Polynesia. Nevertheless, the climate is much more favorable than previously for a positive Rotuman self-identification.

New Zealand

The situation for Rotumans in New Zealand is affected by the social visibility of the indigenous Maori population. The initial division between Pakeha (white European) and Maori remains the anchor of New Zealand ethnic distinctions, although the substantial migration of other Polynesians (particularly Cook Islanders, Samoans, and Niueans) following World War II has made the situation more complex. As in Australia, "Rotuman" is a largely unknown category, and migrants generally identify themselves as from Fiji or Polynesia. But the connotations associated with being Polynesian in New Zealand are complicated by the ambivalent feelings so frequently expressed by Pakehas. The association of Maoris and Samoans in many people's minds with violence and presumed irresponsibility offsets proclaimed liberal commitments to a society in which race is of no consequence. Rotumans find that the Polynesian component of their identity can be problematic at times and contextually variable.

Hawai'i

The people of Hawai'i take pride in the state's multiculturalism and celebrate its diversity. Exceptionally high rates of intermarriage between ethnic groups have created a blend of cultures into which Rotuman immigrants fit quite comfortably. The indigenous Hawaiians, despite recent activism aimed at restoring rights denied them by forced annexation to the United States, have readily incorporated outsiders into their communities, and significant Samoan and Tongan immigration has expanded the Polynesian component of the population. Although Rotuma is unknown to most people in the state, the category "Polynesian" is well known and, in the current political climate, a positive designation. Since a number of Rotuman immigrants have married ethnic Hawaiians, they have, until recently, been all but invisible as an ethnic group.

The Nature of Migration

We have found that the nature of the migration stream—who migrates, when, and for what purpose—also plays an important role in shaping mi-

grant experience and, ultimately, the denotation and connotation of cultural identity. It makes a difference whether migrants are male or female; whether they migrate to take jobs and, if so, in what sector of the economy; whether they enter the country legally or illegally; whether they come as individuals, as spouses of residents, or as families. Likewise, a mass migration within a very short time frame has a different effect than trickle migration over a long span. In the case of Rotumans, their mostly chain migration from Rotuma to Fiji and thence to Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere has important implications.

Fiji

As a result of political affiliation, there have been no barriers to migration between Rotuma and the rest of Fiji. Rotumans began migrating to Fiji for education and jobs soon after cession was formalized, and by 1936 nearly 10 percent of Rotumans lived in Fiji. Today the figure is closer to 75 percent. The flow is not one-way or permanent, however. Individuals of both genders and all ages go back and forth frequently, staying with family members while schooling, getting help while seeking employment, participating in sports or church events, or helping out relatives in various ways while simply enjoying a holiday (see Kaurasi 1991). According to our 1989 survey of 999 adults residing on Rotuma, 953 had been away from the island at least once, and 57 (6 percent) reported having traveled away from Rotuma more than ten times. Some stays are extended; 169 (17 percent) of those surveyed had been employed while away, and many of them had married and had children before returning with their families to live on Rotuma.

Transportation improvements in recent years have increased opportunities for travel. An airport was opened on Rotuma in 1981, and weekly (or bi-weekly) flights to and from Suva are often fully booked. Rotumans (especially those with less money and more time) often prefer to book passage on one of the copra or supply boats that call at the island about once a month. The flow of people between Rotuma and Fiji continues to intensify.

Australia

Rotuman migration to Australia has followed two trajectories, distinguished by gender. The majority of Rotuman women there married Australian men. Many met their husbands in Fiji before emigrating; others came to Australia for schooling or work and met their husbands there. In her study of Rotuman migrants in the Sydney area, Seforosa Michael estimates that "70-80% of all migration to Australia has been the result of marriage to non-Rotuman spouses, most of whom were Australian citizens" (1991:8-9). The Australian

men working in Fiji mostly occupied managerial positions with firms and banks or served in professional capacities. They were generally of middle-class background, and on returning to Australia, they brought their wives into middle-class Australian society, to which the women appear to have adapted successfully. These women and their children seem well adjusted to mainstream Aussie culture and do not consider themselves members of a disadvantaged ethnic group.

The circumstances of Rotuman male migration to Australia have been somewhat different. Many of the older migrants came as sailors and jumped ship. Some were caught and sent home in disgrace, but others married Australian women and settled down. Most eventually legalized their status, although some did not do so for many years, placing them meanwhile in a tenuous social position. Compared to Rotuman women in Australia, Rotuman men span a broader range in the occupational structure, ranging from unskilled workers to positions of management. On the whole, however, our research suggests that they aspire to middle-class living standards, which many if not most have achieved.

Gender differences have had the effect of putting women in a more secure position than the men vis-à-vis Australian society, and it is not surprising that, to date, women have played a dominant role in organizing Rotuman enclaves. They seem to be more secure in asserting Rotuman cultural ethnicity and less constrained in its public display.

New Zealand

In many respects Rotuman migration to New Zealand parallels the Australian experience. An additional factor in this instance was the presence of the New Zealand air force in Suva until Fiji gained independence in 1970. A number of Rotuman women married airmen—some officers, others enlisted men of varied backgrounds. Most melted into the social circles of their husbands, and those who could took advantage of their part-European identification possibility, which served them well in Pakeha society.

In 1994, with the assistance of Rev. Jione Langi, who was pastor at large for the Fiji Wesleyans in New Zealand and himself a Rotuman, we were able to identify 125 families that included at least one person of Rotuman extraction. Langi also helped provide information regarding occupation, year of immigration to New Zealand, and spouse's ethnicity if married. Of the 74 Rotuman women for whom we have marital information, 40 were married to or had been married to white New Zealanders (Pakeha), 15 to Rotuman or part-Rotuman men, 16 to other Polynesians (including Fijians or part-Fijians), 2 to Indians, and 1 to a Chinese man. Of the 36 Rotuman men in

our survey, 14 were married to Pakeha women, 10 to Rotumans, and 12 to other Polynesians. A higher proportion of women thus married Pakeha spouses (55 percent compared to 39 percent of men). Rotumans married to Rotumans or part-Rotumans account for only 23 percent of the New Zealand couples we identified, which, along with the Australian data, suggests that for Rotumans intermarriage and migration are strongly correlated.

As in Australia, Rotumans in New Zealand have largely been integrated into the urban middle class. This position is reflected in our data on occupation, which show a preponderance of both men and women, and their spouses, in managerial/supervisory, professional, or white-collar occupations (75.0 percent of Rotuman women, 70.6 percent of their spouses; 55.9 percent of Rotuman men, 85.7 percent of their spouses).

Our information on year of immigration indicates that Rotuman migration to New Zealand began in the 1950s and reached a peak during the 1970s and 1980s, when New Zealand immigration policy was more lax than it is now. For those on whom we have such data ($N = 70$), 20.0 percent arrived before 1970, 35.7 percent came in the 1970s, 38.6 percent came in the 1980s, and only 5.7 percent immigrated during the first four years of the 1990s.

Hawai'i

Two main sources account for the majority of Rotumans who have settled in Hawai'i. One derives from the stream of students who have attended Brigham Young University at Lā'ie since the mid-1960s, the other from the cable ship *Enterprise*, which docked in Hawai'i for a lengthy period during the 1970s. Most of the former were female; all of the latter were male. Several female students stayed on after completing their education, often taking part-time or full-time employment at the Polynesian Cultural Center. Those who stayed generally married men associated with the Mormon complex known to them either as fellow students or as workmates. A number of men from the cable ship married local women, mostly of Hawaiian ancestry, and obtained their green cards. Subsequently some of these families emigrated to the U.S. mainland, leaving a limited number of Rotuman individuals behind.

As a result of this two-pronged stream, the women who have emigrated are better educated than the men, although the men have done well occupationally, earning a reputation for diligence and reliability in skilled or semi-skilled jobs. Whereas the women tended to congregate in or near Lā'ie and thus knew one another, the men scattered around O'ahu and were mostly absorbed into their wives' communities. It was not until 1994 that a Rotuman community developed, and it required an external stimulus (see below).

Rotumans in Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i have few of the

problems associated with ethnic underclasses. All the evidence at our disposal indicates that encounters with the police are rare, that incidents of violence are few and far between, that unemployment rates are relatively low, and that in general the standard of living for Rotuman migrants approximates that of the white middle class in each location. All these factors reinforce a positive self-, ethnic, and cultural identity.

Size of Community

The size of enclaves is significant insofar as a critical mass is required for organized interactions such as weddings, funerals, and various kinds of cultural performances. When a critical mass is absent, migrants generally adopt ritual practices of their host communities and forgo many of the customs associated with life crisis events in their home societies. However, there also seems to be a point at which ethnic communities grow too large—a threshold after which fissioning occurs, factional disputes multiply, and group integrity becomes problematic. In other words, there appears to be an optimal population range for maintaining the cohesiveness of an ethnic community (although this range no doubt varies between ethnic groups based on a variety of culturally based practices and attitudes). The organizational experience of Rotumans in Fiji, Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i is suggestive.

Fiji

In Suva and Lautoka, the urban centers with the largest Rotuman enclaves, the migrants have organized themselves along the lines of districts on Rotuma (the island is divided into seven relatively autonomous districts, each headed by a titled chief). In fact, there are splits within some of these groups reflecting intradistrict disputes on the home island. These district-based organizations are cross-cut by kinship and to some extent by religious affiliation, but they indicate the importance of place on Rotuma as a locus of identity-defining experience. Except for migrant families relatively isolated in rural settings, the size of Rotuman enclaves in Fiji makes it possible to generate groupings of sufficient size to support virtually any cultural practice and thus to reinforce one's sense of identity as a Rotuman. In the larger cities, however, the frequency of intracommunity conflict sometimes leads people to downplay their Rotuman identity in favor of other options.

Australia

By far the largest Rotuman enclave in Australia, consisting of over one hundred families in which at least one person is of Rotuman extraction, is in

Sydney, where migrants have organized around churches. Rotuman Wesleyans initially joined a Polynesian congregation established by Rev. Jione Langi, who was assigned by the Fiji Methodist Church to serve migrants from Fiji in Sydney before he was posted to New Zealand. When the various Polynesian enclaves grew large enough, they split off, each establishing its own church and supporting its own minister. Soon after its inception, the Rotuman congregation divided over the issue of language. Whereas a core group of cultural conservatives insisted that all services be conducted in the Rotuman language exclusively, others requested that English be used as well. The latter group started their own congregation, without benefit of an ordained minister. Catholic migrants in the Sydney area have organized into a social group that meets periodically; only recently (October 1999) was the first Catholic mass conducted entirely in the Rotuman language.

Other Rotuman enclaves have developed in Brisbane and Melbourne, but they are smaller in size. The Melbourne community, which we have visited twice, consists of around twenty families who have organized in a way that is not church-based. It is still small enough to be inclusive, but personal frictions foreshadow an imminent split should the group increase in size.

New Zealand

The largest concentration of Rotuman migrants in New Zealand is in Auckland, with smaller but nevertheless vital communities in and around Napier and Wellington. In the 1970s a first attempt was made to organize the growing Rotuman enclave in Auckland, but the effort was ill-fated and short-lived; a second attempt met with failure in the 1980s. Factional strife reportedly broke out, leading to disenchantment and bad feelings. Then, following the appointment of Rev. Jione Langi to Wellington in 1985, a gradual process of reincorporation took place. Based on his experience with the Rotuman community in Sydney, Langi made an effort to identify Rotuman families in New Zealand and to organize them. In 1992 he was appointed "pastor at large" to the Fiji Methodist community in New Zealand and relocated to Auckland. He established the Rotuman New Zealand Fellowship as a formal organization with a written constitution, dues, and biannual meetings. The fellowship has hosted Rotuman groups traveling to New Zealand, organized a Christmas sojourn to Fiji and Rotuma, and held fund-raising drives for various purposes. It is nonsectarian in character and divided into three chapters based on regions within New Zealand (Auckland, Wellington, and Waikato/Bay of Plenty).¹

Despite Langi's charismatic leadership, disputes threaten the integrity of the fellowship. Following a trouble-plagued group trip to Rotuma in 1993, during which limited transportation required some families to remain in Fiji,

several members protested and dropped out of the fellowship, threatening group cohesion. After Langi was reassigned to Fiji, most of the protestors returned to the group, and the fellowship presently appears to be strong and active, with well-attended biannual meetings.

Hawai'i

As indicated above, the number of Rotumans in Hawai'i is relatively small, and the men, in particular, are scattered and were initially absorbed into their wives' communities. Rotumans were thus all but invisible ethnically until 1994, when we returned from a field trip to Fiji, Australia, and New Zealand. While we were abroad, several Rotumans, on learning that we were from Hawai'i, had given us the addresses of their relatives here. When we returned to Honolulu, we invited them all to a party at our place, making it clear it was a Rotuman event (we invited them to bring Rotuman delicacies and offered to show home videos of the island and play Rotuman music cassettes). Several of our guests had been unaware of one another's presence in Hawai'i and met for the first time on that occasion.

The party was a great success, and we collectively decided to meet again a few weeks later at Munue Tavo's house, which had a large yard that facilitated Polynesian-style interactions. His wife, Phyllis, is Hawaiian and quickly became a facilitator for the incipient community. Several other gatherings were arranged in quick succession, and soon we decided to form an association with regular membership, dues, and scheduled activities. Munue was elected president and served in that capacity for two years until he and Phyllis moved to Alaska. The "Tefui Club"—the Rotuma Association of Hawai'i—gained impetus when club member Vilsoni Hereniko launched his book, titled *Woven Gods*, about clowning on Rotuma. On that occasion the Tefui Club performed traditional ceremonies and a group dance in front of a large audience of non-Rotumans. The event required many weeks of dance practice; the pooling of resources; and much labor to prepare an earth oven for roasting a pig and taro, *fekei* (Rotuman pudding), *tefui* (Rotuman-style garlands), and *titi* (ti-leaf and flower skirts). Since then the club has performed a number of times in public and has become known within the Polynesian community.

The solidarity of the group was considerably enhanced when Elisapeti Inia, a retired schoolteacher and respected Rotuman elder, visited for a time in 1996. Drawing on her fund of genealogical knowledge, Mrs. Inia was able to show people precisely how they were related to one another, so an association that was initiated on the basis of shared ethnicity evolved into a kin-based community with much stronger ties. The solidarity of the group has

been further enhanced by a series of campouts over holiday weekends, sometimes involving thirteen or fourteen tents and perhaps fifty or sixty individuals sharing a common kitchen shelter. Activities have included singing and dancing, playing cards, teaching crafts, fishing, hunting for crabs on the beach, roasting marshmallows, volleyball, horseshoes, and an enormous amount of teasing, laughing, and horsing around.

Initially the children of mixed marriages were only marginally involved, but they became progressively interested in their "Rotuman side" and now regularly participate in dances and do school projects on Rotuma.² The total number of Rotuman individuals composing the core of this community is about seventeen or eighteen, but with their spouses and children, students at Brigham Young University-Hawai'i who irregularly participate, and occasional visitors, the group swells to a maximum of about sixty individuals.

Our assessment regarding group dynamics is that competent, assertive leadership is required to organize Rotuman enclaves; that the desire to organize is generally strong; but that the larger the group, the greater the probability of personality clashes. Suspicion over the management of group finances is an important, but not the only, trigger for overt expressions of discontent. When we discussed aspects of group identity with migrant Rotumans, they usually began with the positive imagery of themselves as hard-working, honest, and reliable, but several people added that within their own groups Rotumans can be backbiting, touchy, and difficult to lead. The tensions associated with such negative imagery are more likely to manifest themselves when group size exceeds an unspecified threshold.

Generational and Socialization Experiences

Where people are born and brought up and by whom plays an important role in shaping migrant identity. Rotumans raised on Rotuma are generally brought up within an extended family, with the entire local community playing a part. They absorb the subtleties of language and local lore, participate in rituals and ceremonies until they are second nature, and develop a fine-grained knowledge of people's histories and networks of relationship. All of this information, this mastery of that which is Rotuman, generates a sense of self and an ethnic identity saturated with cultural content.

Rotumans raised in Fiji can absorb much of this content as well, although the choice of disassociation is more accessible, and the intensity of socialization is mitigated by a wider variety of experiences, especially in conjunction with peers of other backgrounds. The offspring of emigrants growing up in Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i are mostly children of parents from different cultural backgrounds. Their experience of Rotumanness depends

heavily on the choices their parents make with regard to language use, involvement with other Rotumans in the area, and frequency of visits to the island. To a certain extent these are influenced in turn by the size of the Rotuman community. Thus, even more so than in Fiji, there is variation in how much second-generation Rotuman migrants to Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i know of their history and connections. And unless they have visited Rotuma and spent some time there, their Rotuman identity, if they profess it, is likely to be more a matter of conscious decision and less a matter of internalized content. Visits to Rotuma are regarded as increasingly important to Rotuman parents abroad. They are eager to have their children experience the island's culture, get to know their relatives, see the land in which they have rights, and so forth. In recent years a number of group excursions have been organized for travel to Rotuma from enclaves abroad, and in return Rotumans from Rotuma and Fiji have organized visits to Australia and New Zealand, where they have been hosted by Rotuman communities.

Expressions of Identity

One of the questions guiding our recent research concerned which aspects of Rotuman culture are privileged in its reconstitution abroad. We were interested in how important certain artifacts might be, like fine mats (*apei*) and special garlands (*tefui*)—essentials at ceremonies conducted on Rotuma. Likewise, we wanted to know which, if any, activities were singled out for preservation as symbolic of group identity.

In general, we found the ability to engage in discourse about topics implicating Rotuma and Rotuman culture to be of central importance. When we've asked, "What is most important to maintaining Rotuman culture?" the first thing mentioned by most migrants (particularly those of the older generation who grew up on the island) is preservation of the Rotuman language. The language, in turn, is key for tuning in to Rotuman sayings (see Inia 1998) and the type of banter that is at the heart of intimacy and social life on Rotuma.

Independent of language, the ability to discuss genealogical connections as well as politics, events, and personalities on Rotuma identifies individuals as active members in the Rotuman community. Control of information about Rotuma or about Rotumans in Fiji or elsewhere is a valuable asset. Videotapes have become a hot cultural commodity, allowing migrants to experience key events vicariously or to remember and relive them. Watching videotapes together is an active rather than passive process, as people focus on identifying persons and talking kinship, localities, and recent history while watching. Since November 1996, a Rotuma Web site we constructed also allows those

with Internet access to share news, consult historical documents, discuss issues on-line, and locate one another (see Howard 1999).³

Migrants, their spouses, and their children are increasingly interested in acquiring books and other writings about Rotuma. Some have told us about going to local libraries in search of relevant literature. By seeking out and incorporating such information, they are engaging in the process of objectifying Rotuman culture and history as well as enhancing opportunities for participating in discourse about it.

Of all the activities fostered by migrant organizations, however, none is more important to cultural identity than Rotuman dance. Dance performances contribute to formation of Rotuman cultural identity in three fundamental ways:

1. They provide opportunities for Rotumans to interact with each other, especially during practices, in characteristically Rotuman ways (with much joking and banter) and thus create a venue for consolidating relationships.
2. The lyrics of dances characteristically objectify and idealize Rotuma and its culture. They place heavy emphasis on such notions as the beauty of the island, the bounty of food, gardening and fishing, and Rotuman values of hard work and generosity.
3. Dance engages people in performing publicly as representatives of Rotuman culture and thus encourages identification of performers as Rotumans.

Cultural artifacts also play a role in promoting identity, depending on availability. Rotuman fine mats are available in Fiji, for example, although they are mostly made on the home island and are very costly. Still, they are presented at most ceremonies, along with *tefui* garlands, and are highly prized as cultural emblems. In Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i, however, there are not enough mats to maintain such prestations consistently, so they have largely been withdrawn from circulation or may be used for display only, rather than exchange. Other, more accessible items have come to signify Rotuman (or more generally, Polynesian) identity abroad. Dressing for special events in island-style clothes, eating island foods, and decorating homes with shell leis, woven fans, and photographs or paintings of scenes from Rotuma are all ways of making public or quasi-public statements about cultural identity.

In general, ceremonies abroad are more contracted in time than on Rotuma and more perfunctory in performance. Much ritual on Rotuma focuses on chiefs, who in turn give lengthy speeches. Since chieftainship is

not recognized abroad (except in rare cases when district chiefs visit), significant parts of ritual are omitted, while European cultural practices are often added. There are also restrictions on when ceremonies can be held abroad, since most people work during the week and attend church services on Sunday. That leaves Saturday as prime time for community events. Indeed, expression of Rotuman cultural identity may be thought of as a distinctly weekend phenomenon in some migrant communities.

The Culture Concept Revisited

Ever since Boas pluralized the concept of culture, it is distinctiveness, in one form or another, that gives it meaning. Like others, Rotumans use the concept to emphasize the distinctiveness of certain aspects of experience (such as language, dance, and rituals) that have become icons for an imagined community (Anderson 1983) and that distinguish it from other communities (Fijian, Samoan, Maori, Hawaiian, American, Australian, and so on). The chosen features provide a way for the geographically dispersed, increasingly diffuse community to define itself as Rotuman and to instantiate notions of Rotumanness. But everywhere a Rotuman community exists, the island of Rotuma remains a central place with special significance for people's identities.

The key process that binds a community is communication, and we would place communication at the core of the culture concept. The content of cultural communication is varied, but one can constructively think of it as informed by an array of models for acting, talking, thinking, and emoting (see Shore 1996:56–67 for a comprehensive categorization of genres of cultural models).

In the relatively isolated, confined island communities before Western intrusion, the available cultural arrays were limited, interconnected, and highly patterned. Community members inculcated behavioral patterns and beliefs through a process of enculturation that was informal, continuous, and largely unconscious. Choices were framed within well-defined parameters. Granted such conditions, a concept of culture that was holistic and systemic and that emphasized coherence made sense.

The breakdown of barriers between previously distinct societies, the accelerated movement of peoples around the globe, and the spread of global capitalism and its associated media productions have changed all that. As pointed out above, one consequence of increased exposure has been the objectification of culture by people who have been formally educated or have become worldly in their outlook. When culture is objectified, it becomes possible to disassemble it into component parts; it becomes modular in nature (see Shore 1996 for an account of American culture as modular). It strikes

us that Rotuman culture has been modularized by Rotuman migrants in Australia, New Zealand, and Hawai'i insofar as it is fragmented into segments like language, dance, church services, customs related to weddings, and so on, and is confined in action to special time frames (such as Saturdays or Sunday church.)

In diasporic communities, where there is concern for the perpetuation of a culture, and indeed, at times, its re-creation, we would like to draw attention to a phenomenon we refer to as "cultural bonding." We conceive of cultural bonding as a communicative process whereby individuals reinforce notions of sameness (we-ness) by choosing to stress certain cultural attributes from a broader array. Such shared attributes might include talking the same language (sharing an accent, using the same metaphors, and so on), mimicking one another's body language, agreeing with one another's opinions (or negotiating the bases for disagreement on a common foundation of agreement), or mutually choosing to participate in specific ceremonies or dance forms.⁴

Social bonding is a process that occurs in all communities, even in stable, historically continuous societies. In the ebb and flow of social life, there are times when people emphasize their sameness and other times when they emphasize their distinctiveness. A threat from a common enemy, for example, stimulates an emphasis on commonly shared cultural symbols, while internal competition for resources stimulates the selection of disparate cultural attributes (a process that might be labeled "cultural disassociation").

What distinguishes the processes of cultural bonding and disassociation in ethnically heterogeneous environments (e.g., cosmopolitan urban areas) is that people can choose whether or not to associate with others on the basis of a vast array of cultural models available in the workplace, public arenas, and mass media. Whereas these processes in so-called traditional communities were largely unconsciously patterned, in heterogeneous settings they are more a matter of conscious choice. Formation of an ethnic community in such an environment involves the conscious selection of cultural attributes perceived as unique to the ethnic group, elements that distinguish it from other ethnic groups. In cities like Sydney, Melbourne, or Auckland people consciously choose to associate with others *as* Rotumans and consciously select objectified cultural aspects they identify as Rotuman—aspects that reinforce their social bonds.⁵

One does not have to be ethnically Rotuman to participate in—to be a member of—a Rotuman community. Indeed, some of the most active members of Rotuman communities abroad are the Caucasian and Hawaiian spouses of Rotumans. As long as they engage in the process of cultural bonding by participating in prescribed activities (e.g., dances, feasts, meet-

ings), they are welcomed. It is the commitment to cultural sharing rather than ethnicity that determines membership.⁶

Given this perspective, we find using the culture concept in reference to bounded groups problematic; it does not seem useful to refer to people as "members of a culture." Likewise, we see problems with the notion of culture as consisting of a particular array of cognitive or symbolic representations. We recognize that there is considerable overlap between communities with regard to most of the elements (concepts, beliefs, models for action) we have heretofore assigned to culture and that in the contemporary world the vast majority of people are exposed to an enormously expanded repertoire of possibilities compared to that experienced by their ancestors. In light of these circumstances, we prefer to think of people as "doing culture" rather than "having culture." Metaphorically speaking, this conception suggests a notion of culture as an activity rather than as a thing or a patterned repertoire of things. People form communities by doing culture, that is, by agreeing, overtly or tacitly, to emphasize a selected segment of their total personal repertoires of models for acting and communicating. They maintain communities through cultural bonding and by filtering out cultural materials that they experience as disruptive. Thus, we would shift the emphasis in the culture concept from being to doing, from noun to verb (although we're not quite ready to substitute a term like "culturizing" for culture).⁷

Although people everywhere have developed cultural consciousness and talk about "our culture" in the process of doing culture, there is a distinction between their rhetorical use of the term and its analytical use by anthropologists. An anecdote from our experience illustrates the point. One Saturday we were attending a gathering of the Tefui Club. For the first couple of hours, we sat on a mat under a tree on Kailua Beach, talking story, bantering, and acting in ways that are characteristically Rotuman. The scene could have taken place on any beach in Rotuma, and from our standpoint the club members were doing Rotuman culture par excellence. As the afternoon wore on, however, one of the members looked disconcerted and asked, "Aren't we going to do any Rotuman culture today?" She was referring to singing Rotuman songs, doing Rotuman crafts, or performing some other activity consciously identified as Rotuman.

For club members the repertoire constituting Rotuman culture involves the conscious selection of signature activities and icons, whereas for us, as anthropologists, it incorporates much that is unconscious and unlabeled. We would therefore qualify Appadurai's comment that in the contemporary world of transnational transfer, "culture becomes less what Bourdieu would have called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions) and more an arena of conscious choice, justification and representa-

tion" (Appadurai 1990:18, cited in Brightman 1995:524). While it is true that for people in diasporic communities doing culture has largely become a matter of conscious selection—of heightened cultural awareness—for anthropologists who analyze the phenomenon of doing culture in such communities, the unconscious patterning identified by ethnographers since Boas (whether referred to as *habitus*, latent culture, or some other term) remains and must remain a focus of attention.

To answer the question posed by our title, Rotuman culture has been reconstituted in a number of places where communities, formed through the process of cultural bonding, have come into being. The communities have evolved differently in different contexts, but they all have been formed on the basis of a commitment to conscious, objectified notions of Rotuman language, customs, and beliefs—modules they identify as distinctively Rotuman. The island of Rotuma remains central for all emigrant enclaves precisely because it is the one place where the doing of Rotuman culture is continuous. Overarching these localized communities is an emergent global Rotuman community—discontinuous in time and space—that is being nurtured by enhanced communication via e-mail, the Internet, and a Rotuma Web site, but that is another story (see Howard 1999).

NOTES

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1. Initially there was a fourth chapter on the South Island, centered on Christchurch, but following some moves and defections, the size of the community fell below critical mass, and it has been inactive for the past few years.

2. See, for example, the project by high-school student Hillary Morris concerning the making of *fekei ulu* (breadfruit pudding) now posted on our Rotuma Web site (<http://www.hawaii.edu/oceanic/rotuma/os/fekeiulu.htm>).

3. A majority of Rotumans now live in urban areas and have Internet access, either directly or through work, relatives, or friends. Our Web site contains a register where people can enter an e-mail address as well as other personal information. As of June 2001

the register included nearly five hundred Rotumans with e-mail addresses. We have been informed that many of the people who access the Web site print out news and other features and share them with others without direct access.

4. The process of cultural bonding accounts for shared patterns of behavior and emotion that are neither cognitive nor inherent in public symbolic stimuli. Thus, in the process of interacting on a regular basis, people who engage in cultural bonding come to emulate one another's gestures, fears, expressiveness, and so on. Over time they learn to respond to similar stimuli in similar ways.

5. Cultural bonding supplements what has been considered the main process underlying a community's culture—the process of enculturation. Childhood enculturation in particular—the passing on of fundamental knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors from one generation to the next—has been taken for granted in stable, historically continuous communities. Under diasporic conditions, however, the degree of enculturation to “homeland cultures” is problematic. In some families abroad the language of the homeland is spoken, traditional knowledge and beliefs are passed down, and children learn at least a significant portion of the homeland's cultural repertoire. In other families very little such information is transmitted. The process of cultural bonding nevertheless allows individuals at various stages of development—from childhood to maturity—to choose to learn what is needed to be a vibrant participant in a self-defined Rotuman community.

6. What distinguishes “culture,” so defined, from “ethnic group” is the emphasis in the latter on the bonding principle of genealogy, or “blood.” People may identify themselves as members of the same ethnic group but share little else in common culturally.

7. An emphasis on culture as doing brings it more in line with praxis approaches and diminishes the distinction between idealistic and materialistic perspectives. Thus, economic and political practices, which are responses to material contingencies and are shaped by cognitive models for action, are ways of doing culture in specified circumstances. However, we prefer to emphasize the communication aspects of the culture concept for understanding the phenomena discussed in this article.

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